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THREE POEMS

By NEAL GALLATIN

LANDSCAPE

In the early spring
I walked up into the smooth hills
Of an ancient painting
To plant a tree.
On the highways
I met men and women
Carrying hazel boughs in their hands.
"We will go with you," they said,
"And plant these."

So we journeyed on to the flat green hills.
And when I found a little space
Where the wind might blow on promised leaves,
I told them,
"One day a shadow will move on these hills."
The ladies then raised their faces to feel a wind.
"Come," they whispered,
"Back in the court-way of the palace
The master-painter
Paints a beggar-maid and her babe
For the madonna of the cathedral."

So we walked down the smooth hills of the painting
Each carrying a sharp little breeze,
To blow upon the simple reds and blues
Of the beggar-maid
And whirl about in the circle of her halo.

INTO WATERS

No, Harlequin,
I cannot send you a letter,
But I have written you letters.

On days when the grey veils of the sky
Have trailed across the green surface of the sea.
I have written to you,
Crowding small thin pages
With a torrent of insufficient words, —
Words separated by dashes,
Sentences that have no ending.
And then I slipped small flat stones
Into the envelopes
And dropped them into the sea.

No, Harlequin,
You float on clouds,
Touch sunbeams,
Play with moonlight.
How could you care to know
The thoughts I can only bury in the sea?

REMEMBRANCE

Somewhere there is a crimson flower
Bending in the wind.
Not on these plains,
But by a dark pool.
Often I scatter dream-flowers
In places I do not know.

. . . Thin blue cups
In dry river beds, —
Yellow lilies shining through
Cypress trees —
Bleeding hearts in closed shells
Floating on the sea.
And some night I shall know
The fragrance of flower petals
On the moon.

But now I know
That somewhere there is a crimson flower
Bending in the wind.
Not on these plains,
But by a dark pool.

THE STRANGER

By FREDERICK DAVIS

The porcelain knob on the front door was so high that Ellen Louise had to stretch herself to reach it. On a row of nails along the hall inside hung several winter coats; to the little girl they were Bluebeard's wives. Below sat Mother's rubbers, in which lived an old lady with scores of troublesome children. The odor of fresh-baked cakes was making the air rich. Gingerbread men! thought Ellen Louise. Close the door and keep them in! Don't let them run away — oh, close the door! She pushed it hard; it slammed.

"Ellen Louise!" called Mother, who was in the kitchen, paring potatoes. "How many times must I tell you not to slam the door?"

Ellen Louise began to take off her rubbers.

"Why don't you answer me?"

"What, Mother?"

"You know it's naughty to slam the door, don't you?"

She was wondering if any of the gingerbread men *had* escaped.

"Did you clean your rubbers before you came in?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Don't get any mud on my clean rug, will you, dear?"

But Ellen Louise had not cleaned her rubbers well. Just as she had pushed her boat-feet across the sea-mat a huge monster-dog had put his head around the corner of the house, intent on eating her in one gulp — and she had fled. As she pried her rubbers off, one fragment flew away like a bee straight for a rose in the carpet. She hastened into the kitchen.

"Mother, I dropped a drop of mud on the carpet."

"Oh, what *am* I going to do with you?"

In the hall Mother picked up the lump in one angular hand. It had already stained the rose.

"Now look what you've done! On my good carpet! Oh, dear!"

Mother went back into the kitchen and took up her potato-knife again.

"Be a good girl, now."

Against the wall of the sitting-room stood a desk with legs like twisted Christmas candy, that had been brought from England by Mother's great-great-aunt Lucy when Washington was a general; and beside it, in the darkest corner, the little girl had her doll's house. The cardboard mansion had come from Woolworth's. "It will please her just as much as a more expensive one," Mother had decided for all concerned, "and she'll break it before long anyway."

Ellen Louise set the lady of the paper house in a rocker on the lawn. "Sit up!"

She became a caller. "Why, howdy do, Mizz Jones. How're all the kiddies today? I hope they haven't been naughty, Mizz Jones. When *my* children are bad I spank them hard. Well, I must be going. (Sit up!) Do come and see me, Mizz Jones. We'd love to have you. (Sit up!) Well, good-bye, Mizz Jones, I really *must* — "

Mother appeared in the door frowning. "Such jabbering! I can't hear myself think! Anybody would think you were crazy!"

"Sit up!"

"Don't you ever get tired of playing with that old stuffed salt-sack? I declare, you never give a body a minute's rest. If it isn't this, it's something else! Now, be quiet for a little while!"

An insistent sizzling in the kitchen called her. The little girl followed. While Mother forked the sliced potatoes into the skillet, Ellen Louise eyed the basting pan heaped with cookies on the drain-board of the sink.

"Mother, can I have one?"

"No, you can't have one! It's too near dinner-time. You'll spoil your dinner."

But she felt that Mrs. Jones was frightfully hungry. And just one cookie would do. When Mother's back was turned, the little girl's hand carried one, amber-dark, from the heap. The mother turned to see the blue arms suspiciously hidden.

"Why, what have you *done*? You took a cookie! Didn't I tell you *not* to take a cookie?"

A faint rustle of Ellen Louise's curls admitted her crime.

"Well, put *it* back! Put it back this instant, Ellen Louise. Taking a cookie! I'm ashamed! Mind me!" She wrenched the little hands around and slapped them. "Didn't I tell you you couldn't have a cookie? Didn't I?"

Ellen Louise cried, rubbing her knuckles into her eyes.

"Where's your handkerchief?"

She didn't know.

"I declare! We'll do poor, buying all the handkerchiefs you lose. If you lose another handkerchief I'll sponk you so hard you'll *never* do it again! I'm going to tell Papa when he comes home that you've been a naughty, naughty girl. If you're going to cry, go on upstairs. Go on!"

Ellen Louise struggled up the stairs and went into the white bedroom, where lace bags of lavender hung on the chandelier. She lay on the bed, carefully keeping her shoes off the clean spread, and sobbed. The ceiling was like a sky, with bluebirds flying everywhere. Ellen Louise reached up and took one down and felt its smooth, smooth feathers. She opened her fingers and it flew away singing. . . .

Soon Papa came home from the postoffice. He put his shielded cap and coat on a chair in the sitting-room.

"Henry, you ought to hang your things up," said Mother. "Ellen Louise must be taught."

The little girl was standing on one foot in the doorway.

"How's kitchy?" Papa asked, reaching for her ribs.

"Eek!" cried she, collapsing.

Mother laughed benevolently. Papa rolled his sleeves up his hairy arms and poured some water from the kettle into a basin in the sink.

"Dead horse up the street. Belongs to Jerry Walter."

"That's too bad. What's the matter with it?"

"Old age, I guess. Jerry don't know how to keep a horse."

"Heavy mail?"

"Always is, the first of the month. Mary Hikkins' new baby's sick."

"Mary's not strong, either," Mother said.

"She always looked like a weakly sort."

"What's it got?"

"Don't know. What've you fixed for dinner?"

"Hamburger steak."

"Mmm!" Papa always scooched his face up and said "Mmm!" when Mother fixed hamburger steak.

"It's all ready."

Papa sat down, his sleeves still rolled over his pink elbows, while Mother hastened the things out of the oven. Ellen Louise wriggled into her chair, using the rungs as a ladder. Mother took the cover off the mashed potatoes; a gaseous giant sprang up.

"Went over to Amy Leslie's this morning."

"Amy well?" asked Papa, taking some potatoes.

"Kind of peaked. Pass the pepper, Henry. You ought to see little Jinny dance," she went on; "Amy turned on the victrola and showed me. Jinny dances 'way on the tips of her toes. She could soon learn to be a toe-dancer, I bet. She makes all kinds of maneuvers with her hands when she dances. Amy takes her to all the shows where they have dancing — Jinny likes it. She calls it dancing dolls, and when she goes home she tries to imitate them. You ought to see that child dance! If she was mine, I'd send her to dancing school."

"Well," said Papa with a shading of hurt pride, "has Ellen Louise been a good girl this morning?"

"No, she hasn't. She slammed the door and dropped mud on my good hall carpet and she took a cookie when I told her she couldn't have one, and she's been a naughty girl."

"Baby," Papa said, "you mustn't bother Mother so much."

When Ellen Louise had finished her pudding, Mother brought from the kitchen closet a bottle of *Eternal Youth Bitters*.

"It's time to take your medicine, Ellen Louise."

The victim had already begun to slide off her chair. She was not sick; her healthy but slight little body dis-

liked bitters. Mother poured a spoonful of the black syrup.

"Now, get ready."

"Mother, I don't want any!"

"Ellen Louise, you haven't any pink in your cheeks, and when you haven't any pink in your cheeks you aren't healthy, and you need a tonic. Open your mouth."

The little girl stared defiantly at the stuff.

"Open your mouth!"

"It's all over in a minute," Papa encouraged. "It won't taste bad." He was eating his pudding.

"Ellen Louise, *open* your mouth!"

"It won't taste bad," said Papa.

"If you make me spill it on the carpet — !"

"It won't taste bad!"

"Here it comes, now."

"It won't taste bad," Papa promised again.

"Here, now; here, now — ."

"It's all over in a minute!"

The burning stuff coursed down the little girl's throat.

"There!" Papa exclaimed triumphantly as though he had swallowed it himself. "See? It didn't taste bad, did it?"

She ventured, "Yes."

"Ho!" Mother cried, as though Ellen Louise has sprung a great joke.

"Why," said Papa, wide-eyed, "it didn't at all!"

It did, but Ellen Louise said nothing more.

Papa put on his shielded cap, told Ellen Louise to be good, asked if there was anything Mother wanted him to bring home from the grocery store, and went back to the postoffice for the afternoon mail.

Ellen Louise found a rubber ball behind Mrs. Jones' residence and banged it several times on the carpet. Mingled with the clattering of dishes, Mother's voice came from the kitchen.

"Go out into the yard if you want to play ball. And put your rubbers on before you go out! Stay in the yard; I don't want to have to spank you!"

The ground was brown and damp. Ellen Louise liked to feel it mash under her feet; it was like taffy. She bounced the ball several times against the clapboards of the house. The kitchen door opened swiftly.

"If you must throw the ball, throw it against the fence!"

The fence was not high, and Ellen Louise was obliged to stand close. Almost the first time, she threw the ball too high and it went over. She gasped "Oooh!" and reached wildly for it, but it was gone. There was nothing to do but go after it. She put her arm through a hole in the gate and lifted the latch. The hinges squealed with delight as she came through.

Another world! Ellen Louise's eyes explored it. An iron pump stood beside a crooked walk, and the walk led to a latticed porch. A lady came out of the house and scattered a handful of birdseed on the walk for the sparrows. Papa sometimes brought home from the baker's some coiled, frosted things called snails; the lady's ears were covered by two silver snails.

"Hello," she said.

"H'lo!" Ellen Louise picked up the vagrant ball and hurried back.

"Don't go away," the lady called, dusting her hands. "Rose likes company."

"Mother told me not to."

"Do stay! You've never been over to see me since we came to live here. My little Rose is just like you. Wouldn't you like to eat some nice preserved peaches?"

Ellen Louise let temptation grow while she pushed her toe into the soft ground. She would like to eat some preserved peaches, of course. She could see herself eating a huge, honey-wet preserved peach.

"Rose is inside, and she'd like to see you." The lady put out her hand and said, "Come."

"Who is Rose?"

"My little girl."

"Does she go to Wash'nin' school?"

"Oh, yes. She's in the first grade, you know."

Ellen Louise was in the first grade. "I don't remember her."

"She goes there," the lady smiled.

"I don't remember her."

"She goes there."

"Is her name Rose?"

"Yes; Rose."

"I don't remember a girl — named — Rose!" Ellen Louise gasped it; she was dreadfully sorry she didn't. . . . A rush of trustfulness overcame her. "Do you mind if I bounce my ball on your side of the fence?"

"Bounce it on the house," the lady invited. "The house is much better, isn't it?"

Ellen Louise tossed the ball. It bounced back superbly. The lady exclaimed.

"That was a *good* one, wasn't it?"

"Look!" the little girl promised.

Pop! The ball sailed again beautifully.

"Oh, my!" the lady applauded. "That *was* a fine one!" She smiled. "But do come in and have some preserved peaches and see Rose."

"Mother wouldn't want me to."

"Oh, yes, she would." The lady smiled in a way that made Ellen Louise believe her.

How cool and serene the kitchen was! A huge cabinet, built in the corner, held rows of prim white china plates and cups. The floor was scrubbed white — really white.

"I must take off my rubbers," Ellen Louise said quickly. "I'll make tracks on your floor."

"Don't bother," the lady told her. "Don't take off your rubbers."

Immediately Ellen Louise felt that she would like to make beautiful tracks all over the floor to please the lady of the silver snails.

Pink cats looked at Ellen Louise from the table-cloth. The lady unscrewed the cap of a big jar and spooned juicy peaches into three sauce dishes. She put one dish before Ellen Louise, and a second before an empty chair.

"That's for Rose."

The third was her own.

"Mother's got some p'served peaches," Ellen Louise confided, "but she keeps 'em for when company comes."

"Rose eats peaches all the time. Don't you, Rose?"

"Where's Rose?"

"Goodness me!" cried the lady, laughing lightly. "She's there! Right there in that chair!"

Ellen Louise looked and looked while she ate. Another little girl did seem to be sitting there, a little entity of perfume.

"You can have some more peaches if you'd like them," the lady suggested. "Do you want some more, Rose?"

Rose echoed Ellen Louise's no, very softly.

The lady carried her own dish to the sink in the corner. Ellen Louise hastened to help. The juice made her dish slippery. Falling, falling! Oh! There it went, right into the sink, and broke into many pieces. The little girl jumped; she unconsciously wiped her sticky fingers on her dress as her heart danced, as her eyes clung to the lady's.

The lady smiled. It was quite the right thing to break the dish in the sink. How could any nice person ever fail to break her dish in the sink?

"I'll just get another one," she said, putting the fragments aside daintily as though they deserved to be

treated kindly for having broken so beautifully. "There are lots of dishes in the world, aren't there?"

Oh, lots! And every one aching to be broken in a sink as quickly as possible.

"Let's go into the sitting-room," the lady suggested. "What's that, Rose?" she put in, listening. "You want to play for the little girl? Well, well, what do you think? Rose wants to play for us."

The lady's eyes were so happy that Ellen Louise was breathless.

The sitting-room was warm and cozy; the brown wood-work seemed toasted. The rack of the harpsichord, its varnish sugared, pictured a little boy in white pantlets sitting on a ruby rock and serenading six goslings. An old, old davenport stood opposite, with feet like lions' claws and upholstered with scarlet plush worn whitish in the middle. A sawdust doll was asleep there.

"Dear me," the silver-snailed lady sighed. "Rose leaves her playthings everywhere." Again, it was so joyously troublesome: "Just everywhere."

She nestled the doll in her lean hands as she sat down. Ellen Louise climbed up beside her.

"Rose, what are you going to play for the little girl?" The thin lips pursed expectantly. "It's a little piece of Chopin's," she whispered to Ellen Louise. "You'll hear the raindrops falling — falling right down."

Her forefinger lifted daintily as the raindrops began to patter.

Ellen Louise listened, her lips apart, a long time. The starch in her dress creaked a little. Finally the lady sat back and sighed.

"Rose plays so nicely," she said. "Did you hear the raindrops?"

"Oh, yes. They fell right down the window-panes. They ran right down?"

"*Didn't* they?" the lady cried delightedly.

"I could hear 'em," Ellen Louise said. "And I could hear the birds in their nests waiting for it to stop raining, too."

"They were *so* cozy, weren't they?"

"They were keeping the rain off the little birds with their wings."

"The baby birds mustn't get wet," the lady agreed softly.

"The flowers were glad."

"*So* glad!"

"They were glad that it was raining, 'cause then they could grow some more. Flowers like to grow. They like to get bigger and bigger and look pretty. They like it when the rain makes them wet. I heard the flowers singing in the rain—they were singing to the raindrops. They said, 'We're *so* glad you came,' and the raindrops said, 'We're *so* glad we could come.' Their heads went up and down while they sang."

"All the time," the lady said, nodding as though she were a flower, too.

A discordant screech came from far away: "Ellen Lou-eeze! Ellen Lou-eeze!"

"That's Mother," said the little girl, quickly. "She wants me home."

"Oh, can't you stay?"

"Mother wants me home," she persisted, slipping down, her palms bunching her dress at her hips.

"You'll come back soon, won't you, to see Rose again?"

"I want to see Rose again. I want to hear her play again, too. Good-bye!" Ellen Louise said. They walked into the kitchen together while Mother's voice called once more. At the latticed porch Ellen Louise added: "And thanks for the peaches!"

When she came through the gate Mother was hurrying off the walk, wringing her hands in her apron. Mrs.

Leslie, who lived across the street, was standing like an owl on the doorstep.

"My ball went over the fence," the truant said.

"My soul! Ellen Louise, didn't I *tell* you not to go out of this yard? You *never* mind me! You're so naughty!" She hurried forward and grasped the little girl's arm. "The idea!" Ellen Louise fairly dangled as Mother hustled her into the kitchen.

"*You* just wait till Papa comes home! *He'll* handle you. — Going out of the yard when I told you not to!"

"Tha's naughty," said Mrs. Leslie, wrinkling her fullish face.

"Take *off* your rubbers in the kitchen. You bad girl! Do you know what's behind the stove — do you?"

A paddle was.

"Well, when Papa comes home, *he'll* handle you. You'll *never* go in the next yard again if you know what's good for you."

"I sh'd say not," Mrs. Leslie put in darkly; "no tellin' what th' woman'd do."

"I've tried to be *so* careful that Ellen Louise didn't go near her and — now — gracious!"

"She looks so peaceabl'-like," Mrs. Leslie adjudged. "Nobody could hardly tell it. When she first come back from the — you know — *I* couldn't tell it. But she *may* be dangerous. They get that way — an' it's been six year now since the little girl died."

"Go *right* upstairs, Ellen Louise — go *right* up! You're not going to get any supper, and when Papa comes home — *you'll* see!"

The little girl clattered upstairs. She went straight across the Flying Bluebird room. Until Papa came home she nosed and tongued the window pane, waiting for Rose to smile at her through the curtains of the house next door.

TWO POEMS

By GRACE STONE COATES

SYRINGA HEDGE

He saw a clumsy bundle — and a bill —
 Ungainly shrubs to plant a sun-drenched slope,
Coarse wrappings laid aside for service still;
 She saw eternal-springing human hope.

He knew the heavy boulders he must tear,
 The ache of shoulder, labor's acrid taste,
The water he must lead from — God knew where!
 But she knew Loveliness redeeming Waste.

When honeyed blossoms haunted them with scent,
 As Spring's white passion through its branches ran,
He saw a task perfected, was content, —
 But she was breathless Syrinx fleeing Pan!

CADENCE

If I replenish a jug, I overfill it;
 Not that my eye is dull or my hand unsteady —
 The moment for caution finds me alert and ready —
Ask the musical liquid why I spill it!
There is an eager hidden cadence that goes
 Mounting the neck of the bottle, finer and faster,
 Whose gamut never is ended till lush disaster
Intervenes, and the vessel overflows.

So with life. I gamble a whole year's wages;
 When I dance, I whirl all night insatiate,
 Love till I loathe, and drink till my cycle's ended!
How can I tell the querulous, treadmill sages
 Chiding my faults, who argue with me, and expatiate,
 I, too, am slain in a shattered rhythm suspended.

THE OLD TRAIL

By HARRY GOODHUE HUSE

"Now, Grandpa, you jest move your chair out in front while I rid out in here. It's nice and warm out there in the sunshine. After while you can go down to the well and get me a fresh pail of water."

Grandpa Roe puffed on his pipe, and sat still. They were always bossing him around these days — especially Mamie. Seemed like she ought to have enough to do already, keeping house in a tent, and cooking the meals, and tending the younguns, without fussing over him that way — just like he was the baby.

"Come on, Grandpa. You jest set outside in the nice warm sun. You can watch Jim pickin' rock off the south forty."

Grandpa Roe shuffled his feet ever so little, and stared rebelliously at his daughter-in-law. That was it — being bossed around by everybody — and sitting in the sunshine, watching other folks work.

"Come on now, Grandpa." She moved over and patted him on the shoulder. "I gotta rid out in here."

He shrugged away from the caress, impatiently.

"Come on now, Grandpa."

He clutched the arms of the chair, and thrust himself to his feet. "I don't see no sense in bein' so pertickler 'bout riddin' out. Folks livin' in a tent in Montana is campin' out, even ef they have been there all summer." He grasped the chair by the back, and dragged it noisily after him, across the loose board floor.

"Set it over by the west corner, Grandpa, and you can see Jim workin'."

From where he sat, in the comfortable old canvas-bottomed chair, Grandpa Roe had a good view of the activity going forward in the south forty. Jim was skir-

mishing around with a sharp-pointed pick, rooting up the scattered rocks which here and there thrust dull grey noses through the brown sod of the prairie. Grandpa Roe would like mighty well to be over there with him, if they had another pick, and his back would hold up.

He eyed his son appraisingly, as the younger man swung the pick aloft, sunk the point deep into the earth back of a boulder, and flipped it out of the ground with a quick upward wrench of the handle. Jim was a good hard-working boy all right, providing he turned out to be stout enough for this new country. Homesteading was a strong man's job — not like the easy farming Jim had been brought up on, back in Nebraska. Tough sod here that pulled the heart right out of your horses, and wore down the edges of the breaking plow a half-inch a day. Drought in the summer, burning up the crops — blizzards in the winter, killing off the stock! Grasshoppers, maybe — and hog-cholera. Grandpa Roe didn't know whether or not they had those things here in Montana — there hadn't been any talk of them so far. But he had had to buck them, in those early days back in Nebraska, when Jim was just a baby. New country fought you, when you tried to take it. Seemed like it hated to change. It fought you spitefully, like Old Man Knowles, that rancher up in the mountains. A man had to be on guard and ready to fight back any minute. Young fellows like Jim didn't know. They wouldn't be so confident and cheerful.

Grandpa Roe straightened in his chair, and peered intently at unusual happenings in the south forty. The pick was lying on the ground a couple of yards from the boulder his son had been going after. Jim was standing there, looking sort of silly, rubbing his hands as if they stung. That was a good one! Grandpa Roe knew all right just what had happened. There had been more of that old boulder under the sod than Jim had bargained for. The point of the pick had struck hard rock, instead

of yielding ground, and the shock had flirled the handle right out of Jim's grasp. "He, he," snickered Grandpa Roe. "He, he,—you miscalculated that one, young feller."

It was nice and peaceful out here in the sunshine. He could hear Mamie fussing around inside the tent, dressing the children. She would be wanting that pail of water before long. He gazed off across the prairie. This was good country all right — this Nine Mile Bench — stretching away in one great upward sweep, clear to the Highwood Mountains. Nary a tree, and only a few scattered boulders. Good rich soil that would grow a crop as soon as you got it broken. Funny it had taken folks so long to find out they could raise wheat here by dry-farming. Homesteaders now on every half-section, and the land had only been open six months. Good solid farmers mostly, like himself and Jim, moving west from states where land had got too high-priced. Tents and shacks were going up everywhere.

It was a good joke on the old-timers, like Old Man Knowles, living off up in the mountains. Been travelling that old trail there, stretching cat-a-corner across the homesteads, for forty, fifty years — travelling right across this bench without ever knowing what it was good for. Thought all it would raise was grass for sheep and cattle. They were living up there in the mountains, in rocky valleys where there wasn't any room to grow things, with the range where their stock used to feed broken up and fenced in for homesteads. Sour grapes, all right! That was what made them so hot-headed about the fences, — and the new road going west, then south, then west again, along the section lines, like it did back in Nebraska. Well, they'd have to get used to it! If he had been Jim, he'd have fenced right across the old trail, without leaving an opening. There wouldn't be any trouble then about gates being left down, and stock get-

ting out. He looked solicitously at Old Fan, the milch cow, grazing down in the coulee.

Mamie came to the door of the tent, rattling the tin dipper in the empty galvanized-metal bucket. "Now, Grandpa," she said, "you can go down to the well, and get me a fresh pail of water. Nice out today, ain't it?" She leaned against one of the rough scantlings which framed the doorway, gazing off across the prairie.

"It's gittin' terrible dry," said Grandpa Roe, "ef it don't rain soon everybody'll have to stop breakin'."

It was hot out in the sun this morning — hot enough to make a man sweat when he was carrying a heavy pail of water. Grandpa Roe paused for breath in one of the ruts he was crossing, set down his bucket, and mopped his forehead with a faded blue bandana. It must have been a pretty shiftless country, he guessed, before the homesteaders came. Take this old trail here now, stretching off across the prairie. Used for forty, fifty years, and never graded. Stages and wagon-trains used to travel along it, he'd heard, back in the old days before there were railroads, and everything had to come by steam-packet up the Missouri River. Just one set of wagon-tracks first, streaking it across the prairie. Then, when the ruts wore down so deep the axles dragged, they moved over a couple of feet, and started some new ones. Must be ten, twelve rods wide now. Going to be a mean thing to break across when they came to plow it. Have to h'ist just right on the handles to keep the point in the ground. If you h'isted too much you'd bury the plow, and break a whiffle-tree sure as the devil. Grandpa Roe picked up his bucket, and moved toward the tent. He'd show Jim how to hold the handles.

Back in his chair, Grandpa Roe relighted his pipe, took two or three gurgling puffs, and gazed off again along the old trail. Two hundred yards away, where it crossed the southern boundary of the homestead, was the gate he

and Jim had argued about, a sagging affair of barbed-wire, fastened to upright staves. From the wires hung broad ribbons of white rag, torn off one of Mamie's old underskirts. That was another one of Jim's ideas. "Folks comin' along the trail at night'd run smack into that gate and cut up their horses." "Serve 'em right," said Grandpa Roe, "ain't got no business travellin' there. Road goes along the section-lines." "Might as well let 'em use it till we get the land broken out," said Jim. "Saves a heap of time for the fellers in the mountains." Grandpa Roe had made a mistake all right, raising Jim so easy, back in Nebraska.

It was nice and warm this morning. Grandpa Roe's head nodded, and he drowsed in the sunshine. Something hot stung the back of his hand. He flirited it off impatiently, and opened his eyes. His pipe had dropped from his mouth, depositing a trail of ashes and glowing crumbs of tobacco down the front of his vest. He stared at them petulantly. Going to sleep like that, in the middle of the day! He brushed himself carelessly, with the ends of his fingers, and gazed along the old trail. There was a cloud of dust there, in the distance. It was too big to be raised by a team and wagon. Must be somebody driving cattle in to town.

As he watched, the cloud drew nearer, mounted higher, and became more dense. It was cattle all right, coming down the old trail. Grandpa Roe could make out the shadowy figures of the leading animals against the opaque background of dust. Two, three hundred head, he guessed, from the size of the cloud they were kicking up. Fat beef cattle, probably, ready for the market — coming down the old trail to shorten the drive.

A figure on horseback split off from the herd, and rode ahead, at an easy gallop, toward the south fence where Jim was working. They must be aiming to drive right through the place. That fellow was going over to ask

Jim if they could open the gate. Lucky for them they were asking Jim, instead of him, thought Grandpa Roe. Driving their cattle like that across a man's land, raising a cloud of dust that would take a half-day to settle. His eye fell upon Old Fan, the milch cow, down in the coulee. She had ceased grazing, and now stood lowing softly, her eyes intent upon the approaching herd.

Grandpa Roe scrambled to his feet in alarm. Jim should have thought of that! The minute they opened the gate, and those steers came pouring in, Old Fan would be over there in that herd, sure as shooting. Like as not they'd drive her right into town, without acting as though they noticed. Cattle-rustling, these westerners called it. He'd heard about such things. Snatching up Old Fan's picket-rope from beside the tent, he hustled toward the coulee.

The horseman shouldn't have stopped so long to chat with Jim, Grandpa Roe noticed, as he secured Old Fan with the rope, and hustled her toward the nearest fence-post. Even riding sharp now he wouldn't get that gate opened before the herd got there. Grandpa Roe reached the post, slid Old Fan's rope around it, knotted it securely, then gave it three or four half-hitches, for additional safety. It was turning out just as he thought. The young fellow on horse-back hadn't made it. The leading animals had reached the closed gate, and were mushrooming out along the fence. The rider came galloping up, a minute late. Another horseman came out of the dust at the rear, to intercept him. It was, Grandpa Roe saw, with a little tingle of hate, Old Man Knowles, that fire-eating old rancher from up in the mountains.

The two riders met, a dozen yards away. "Yer a hell of a cattleman," said the older man, peevishly, through a scraggly, tobacco-stained beard, "what's the sense in ridin' off thataway, and lettin' these critters get all strung out along the fence. Suppose you went over there

like a softy, to ask him please could you open his damn gate."

"There, there, Pa," said the younger man, grinning, "jest take it easy. We'll have the gate open and the cattle through in a right smart jiffy."

"Ain't no business bein' a gate there," snarled Old Man Knowles. There wasn't, eh? Grandpa Roe bristled.

"Now, Pa, a man's got a right to put a fence 'round his place if he wants to. Right thoughtful of him to leave an openin'."

"Ef he hadn't I'd a-took the whole damn fence down," said Old Man Knowles, belligerently. Grandpa Roe bristled again. He'd have something to say about that.

"There, there, Pa," said Young Knowles, still grinning, "you ride on back, nice and easy, and bunch up the stragglers, while I open the gate."

Grandpa Roe snickered. That was the way to talk to the old hot-head. Old Man Knowles must have heard him, for he swung about in his saddle, with a hostile glare. Grandpa Roe met it squarely. No doddering graybeard, in leather pants, hunched down in a big stock-saddle, could run over him.

"Come on now, Pa," said the younger rider, jostling his father gently away from the fence, "you go look after them critters at the back of the herd. First thing you know they'll be a-strayin'."

The last of the cattle were now clearing the gate, moving along down the old trail, headed for town. Old Man Knowles slouched on his horse at the end of the line. It looked like he figured on being the last one through. He acted like he didn't intend to put up the gate. Grandpa Roe set himself alongside the trail, and waited.

The last steer passed through the opening, scampering clumsily, to catch up with the herd. Old Man Knowles followed him. He glanced contemptuously at the sprawling gate, at the flimsy tent on the little rise, at Grandpa

Roe, alert and quivering, beside the trail, and came straight on.

"Hey, you," yelled Grandpa Roe, "git down off that horse, and close that gate!"

"To hell with that gate," snarled Old Man Knowles. He rode straight up to Grandpa Roe, leaned down from his horse, and shook his fist in the other's face. "To hell, old man," he shouted, "with both you and yer damn gate!"

To hell with him, eh, and his gate, and with the homesteaders, and all the rights given them by the government? Grandpa Roe's hands shot out, and seized Old Man Knowles by both sagging shoulders. With a strength of which he had not thought himself capable these days, he jerked the rider out of his saddle, and down into the hoof-beaten dust of the trail. They rolled over and over there, scratching, clawing, whimpering, like a couple of wild-cats — rolled over and over, clutching at each other's wrinkled throats, until they lay, gasping and exhausted, in one of the ruts of the trail.

Young Knowles and Mamie, who had come running down from the tent, parted them, and hoisted them to their feet. "Shame on you, Pa," said Young Knowles, restraining his struggling father with one arm, "fighting thataway, jest like a school-boy." "Why, Grandpa," said Mamie, "whatever's come over you, pickin' a silly quarrel with that old gentleman?"

Silly quarrel, eh? They'd have known whether or not it was a silly quarrel if he could have got at his pocket-knife. Grandpa Roe shook off Mamie's supporting arm. He wished she'd quit brushing the dust off his clothes.

Young Knowles was hoisting his father up on his horse. He settled the old man in the saddle, then went to close the gate. "I'm sorry, ma'am," he said, as he resumed his own mount, and prepared to ride away, "that they got in a fuss. I hope yer father ain't hurt none."

"Oh, no," replied Mamie, smiling, "he'll be all right soon as he sets down and rests up a spell." She patted Grandpa Roe on the shoulder. He jerked away, edging over toward Old Man Knowles. "I'll git you fer good and all, next time," he whispered up at him, so Mamie wouldn't hear. "You think you will," muttered Old Man Knowles. "I'll be comin' back through here alone Sunday, and ef I feel like it, I'll open every damn gate on the place, and leave it open."

It was funny they didn't talk more about it, that night at supper. Grandpa Roe guessed they didn't want to scare the children. Jim had come hurrying up from the south forty just as Old Man Knowles and his son rode away. He had helped Grandpa Roe up to the tent, and had said something joking about being too old for such goings-on. Well, they'd see. He had raised Jim easy, and now someone else had to do the fighting. That red-eyed old rancher meant trouble. There had been murder in his eye, while they were rolling on the ground. Grandpa Roe had seen that look in men's eyes before, when he was pioneering back in Nebraska. The old devil would be riding back alone Sunday. He'd be armed, sure as shooting. That was the way with these western fellows. When they found out a man could lick them in a fair and square fight, they fell back on a gun. Treacherous as snakes, folks had told him. There'd be trouble — bad trouble on Sunday.

Grandpa Roe figured out his scheme, and looked up from the table. "Seems like it's 'bout time you and Mamie and the younguns rode over and seen the Klinkers. You ain't visited them but once sence we come out here together."

"Ain't been much time fer visitin'," said Jim, "sence us and the Klinkers come here."

"Well, why don't you go over Sunday," said Grandpa Roe, "and see how they're gittin' on?"

"It would be kinda nice to go over Sunday, Jim," said Mamie; "the children'd enjoy it. It would be real nice for you to go too, Grandpa."

Grandpa Roe shook his head. "No, you folks go 'long and have a good time 'thout me. I'll jest stay 'round here and look after things. Don't care much fer joltin' over the prairie in a lumber wagon."

"It would be kinda nice to go, Jim," said Mamie, "if you ain't too played out, and Grandpa won't get lonesome."

"Huh," snorted Grandpa, "me git lonesome! You go ahead and go."

Grandpa Roe sat in the old chair, before the tent, where he could see both ways along the trail, with Jim's 30-30 across his knees. The prairie stretched away before him in a great upward unbroken reach, shimmering with heat, to the Highwood Mountains, veiled in their mid-day mantle of haze. The old trail, deserted and empty, threaded its way across that prairie as far as his eye could reach. Somewhere back there on that many-rutted road, between him and town, was Old Man Knowles, a thin, scraggly-bearded figure, humped over in a big stock-saddle, riding out from town alone, with murder in his eye.

Well, let him come, the old dog-in-the-manger! Thought he owned the whole prairie because he used to run his cattle over it. Thought he could ride rough-shod over the rights of hard-working farmers who were going to make something of the country. Thought they were easy-going and he could get away with high-handedness, did he? Just let him come and find out the difference. Let him come, the treacherous old rattlesnake, with a revolver probably hidden in one of these secret holsters in his left arm-pit. And just let him start something!

Grandpa Roe looked approvingly at the rifle across his

knees. These were great guns they made nowadays. Not like the old smooth-bores he had learned to shoot with. Good twist in the barrel, and a lot of powder back of the ball. It would throw its lead-nosed bullet pointblank at two hundred yards. It'd kill a man easy up to a thousand. Bullet flattened out like a mushroom, soon as it hit anything. Made only a little opening, small as the end of your finger, where it went in, but tore out a hole on the other side you could stick your fist into.

Grandpa Roe again checked over the situation. He'd see Old Man Knowles coming when he was still two, three miles away. Then he'd move his chair around front a little, so the rider coming along the trail couldn't see him until he was already trespassing, and was down near the gate. Grandpa Roe would yell at him then and tell him to get off the place, back the way he came from. Old Man Knowles would keep right on. That was the kind of hot-head he was. Grandpa Roe would wait until he had swung from his horse, opened the gate, and was about to climb back on. Then he'd yell again and show him he meant business. When Old Knowles reached for his gun, Grandpa Roe would start shooting.

He looked again at the rifle across his knees, then down toward the gate. There was an empty kerosene tin there, lying on the ground beside a post. Grandpa Roe slipped forward the safety on the 30-30, and raised it to his shoulder. He cuddled his cheek against the walnut stock, sighted carefully, and squeezed the trigger. The kerosene tin leaped from its place, and rolled over and over. As it came to rest, Grandpa Roe nodded with satisfaction at the great gaping hole which the bullet had ripped out of the rusty metal. That was the way he'd talk to him!

Grandpa Roe gazed off again across the sweeping prairie. It was nice and warm here in the sunshine. This was a good country all right—this Nine Mile Bench. Hard country right now, fighting against being took.

Hard and tough like the sod they'd have to be breaking. Hard and tough like Old Man Knowles, riding out alone from town, with hatred in his heart. Hard tough country, and hard tough sod, and a hard tough enemy. Young fellows like Jim didn't know. They'd been raised too easy. Going to be good country though, after they got it broke and planted. Good mellow farming country like Nebraska, with nice houses and big barns — nice white houses and big red barns — white houses — red barns. Grandpa Roe's head nodded, and he drowsed in the sunshine.

He shivered slightly, and half-opened his eyes. Seemed like the sun must have gone under a cloud. It was downright chilly. He struggled up in his chair, and opened his eyes wide. Here it was going on evening. The idea of his falling to sleep that way, in the middle of the day! Time for the folks to be getting home.

His eyes fell on the rifle, lying in the grass, where it had slipped from his knees. Then he remembered. He shot a quick, fearful glance at the gate. It lay, a tangled mass of curling barbed-wire and flimsy wooden staves, sprawling on the ground across the ruts of the trail. The landscape was deserted and empty!

Grandpa Roe clenched his skinny hands. The cowardly scoundrel, sneaking by like a scared coyote! Flouting the homesteaders' rights with no one to stop him! Snickering into his dirty old beard at the way he had outsmarted him! Alive and crowing, right now, somewhere off along the darkening trail! Grandpa Roe flirted away the tears which came into his eyes, and shivered slightly. It was chilly and lonesome out here in the evening breeze. He huddled down a little further into his blue denim jumper, and shivered again. It was getting real late, and the folks weren't home. Old Fan lowed softly, down in the coulee. Jim ought to be there right now, milking her. He reached down and picked up

the rifle, then rose and carried it inside the darkening tent. It was chilly and lonesome there, too. Mamie ought to be home right now, building a fire in the stove, and getting their supper. He went out again, in front of the tent, and sat down to watch for them.

Grandpa Roe sat in the old canvas-bottomed chair, outside the lamp-lighted tent, in the deepening twilight, and gazed off across the purple prairie. Jim was down in the coulee, milking Old Fan. Mamie was inside the tent, rattling around the cook-stove, getting supper. She and the children were chattering and laughing at a high old rate. They'd had a pretty fine visit, he guessed, though Mamie said she'd worried some about his being home there, lonesome. He drew his thin shoulders further down into his jacket. This Montana cold, once the sun went down, struck right into a man's bones, hunting out the marrow.

Mamie came to the door of the tent, and stood there, gazing at him. "Better come on in out of the night-air, Grandpa. It's nice and warm in here alongside the stove."

Grandpa Roe puffed on his pipe, and sat still.

"Come on now, Grandpa, you'll catch your death a-cold out there."

Grandpa Roe shuffled his feet ever so little, and stared rebelliously at his daughter-in-law.

"Come on now, Grandpa," said Mamie, moving over and patting him on the shoulder. He drew away from the caress petulantly, then grasped the arms of the chair and struggled to his feet. "A little night air don't hurt no one. Folks livin' in Montana has got to git used to it." He grasped the chair by the back, and dragged it through the door of the tent after him.

That was it — being bossed around by everybody — specially Mamie. Fussing over him that way — just like he was a baby.

IF WE COULD TALK

By FRANCES HALL

If we could talk as murmuring waters do
In rippling nuances of shining sound;
And by smooth-waved serenity girt round,
Exchange slow words with just a friend or two
As ocean patterns shift from green to blue;
And when our talk should veer to things profound
If it would gleam like water deepening down
To bare rock bottom and there build anew —

We could not hurt each other quite so much;
We should not grope for words to clothe our dreams;
We'd paint our pictures with a foam-soft touch,
Or write a symphony in phosphorus gleams.
And in our love songs there would always be
The deep, unending yearning of the sea.

TO A LOVER

By ROBERTA HOLLOWAY

To you who caught my heart with tiny spells,
And pinned a row of kisses on my dress,
And plucked me buttercups and white sea-shells,
I must confess at last my weariness.

You made a yellow song to match my bonnet,
And fashioned little hollows for my knees
In the green moss, that I might kneel upon it;
I am dismayed, my sweet, with all of these.

How shall I say I seek, but never find,
Within you the long, echoing light I love?
These are the revelations of your mind:
Pleasant small shadows, where small beauties move.
Do you much wonder, then, that I am loth
To sweeten flesh with soul, and give you both?

POEMS

By RUTH LECHLITNER

ANOTHER SONG OF SPRING

Beyond my garden in the sun,
I'll wait for him each April day,
And sing the old, unfinished song
To pass the golden time away.

And when I know he will not come,
I'll bind up close my yellow hair,
And I will go about my work
To make them think I do not care.

Into a yellow shining bowl
I'll put a yellow shining rose,
Or maybe walk a little bit
Beyond the garden where it grows.

And there I shall find other maids
With eager eyes, who watch and sing . . .
But I who walk by quietly
Have learned another Song of Spring.

CLOUDY DAY

There is no use in little flowers
Reaching toward the hidden sun,
When all the sweets of morning time
Fall into shadow, one by one —

For love slipped out at break of day
In sandals fashioned of the moon,
And carried in a silver net
The songs he sang at yester-noon.

FUTILE

I don't know why I'm waiting here,
For you that have not heard of me —
For you that may not ever be.

Maybe you'll pass me when you come,
Because I am not anything:
I cannot dance, I cannot sing.

And after all the empty years
The dreams I had I'll lay away
For someone else to use . . . someday.

DAYBREAK

When the young winds of morning stir the willows,
And the new sky is exquisite with light,
I know that life shall rise to other living
Beyond the shadow of the last sweet night.

Eternity is but a fragile moment —
Yet moments such as these may come again:
Lyric with drifting mist along the river,
And cool white iris shining after rain.

CANDLE LIGHT

I have two candles tall and fair —
Light for the shadow of my prayer:
One still and white, and one that knows
The color of a dusky rose.
For little gods that laugh and weep
Out of the darkness when I sleep,
Flaming rose or shaft of light —
Which candle shall I burn tonight?

SEARCH

The unhurrying dark goes by on weary feet,
And all my thoughts walk with it, heavily,
Making a strange, sad rhythm, like the beat
Of slow waves from the gray heart of the sea.

The pale stars shed their evanescent light
Above the unkept tryst; what mockery
To seek you in these sweet blind eyes of night
And find you in the bitter dawn of day!

BIOGRAPHICAL

GRACE STONE COATES lives at Martinsdale, Montana. THE MIDLAND for June 15, 1925, was devoted to a collection of her poems.

FREDERICK DAVIS is a native of Missouri. He has done newspaper and magazine work for several years past in New York City and New England.

NEAL GALLATIN's name has lately become familiar to readers of the poetry magazines. Her home is Casper, Wyoming.

FRANCES HALL lives in Monrovia, California.

ROBERTA HOLLOWAY also makes her home in California, at Berkeley. Her verses have appeared in *Poetry*, *Contemporary Verse*, *The Lyric West*, and other periodicals.

HARRY G. HUSE, following his graduation from the University of Nebraska, engaged in the business of advertising and selling, which he followed successfully for a number of years. There was one interval during which he saw service in the war, later spending several months on a Montana wheat ranch. Mr. Huse is now giving all his time to writing. "The Old Trail" is his first published story.

RUTH LECHLITNER is known to MIDLAND readers through earlier contributions. She is at present a graduate student at the University of Iowa.

